

BRASS TORCH

The news, issues and newsmakers affecting the people of Greater Waterbury

ASSET BUILDING

The Waterbury Prevention Policy Board (PPB) has been working diligently through multiple committees, individual PPB representatives, and its Community Liaison, Amanda Hunyadi, to share some important messages about Developmental Assets, the things that can make a positive difference in your life, and the life of the Waterbury community. You may remember the Search Institute definition of such assets as the "building blocks all young people need to grow into healthy, caring, responsible adults." As we embark upon the New Year, it's a good time to take stock of what's been done so far, and what we need to do now.

Last Spring the PPB surveyed sixth and ninth grade youth to see how many of the forty Search Institute Developmental Assets Waterbury youth have. The result: on average, Waterbury youth have 18.9 assets. This is great baseline information. However, it establishes the need to work as a community to increase that number to approach 40, the total number of assets identified by the Search Institute as essential for positive youth development.

Twenty local youth serving organizations, including some school-based programs, have already taken an agency survey developed to ascertain the number of assets the agencies are delivering in their programs and activities for youth. By reviewing the results of those surveys, individual agency leaders will now be able to determine where they have strengths with regard to the Assets, and where they can work to intentionally embed additional assets into programming. Other agencies that did not participate in the agency survey last Spring are also beginning to examine

their programs through the lens of the Forty Developmental Assets, using the survey instrument as a tool to begin programs examination in the context of the Developmental Assets. Those agencies too are beginning to amend programs and activities to include more assets.

On October 16, 2007, the PPB conducted the Waterbury YOUTH SUMMIT: "What's Up With Our Kids?" At the event, sponsored by the Mayor-City of Waterbury, the Connecticut Community Foundation, and the United Way of Greater Waterbury, more than 200 representatives from nearly all segments of the Waterbury community attended and heard the Search Institute national presenter, Jim Conway, share the results of the Waterbury Youth Surveys. He was able to provide context to facilitate understanding of the importance of each survey result, and the results in combination. He also shared many anecdotes about how simple steps within communities have contributed widely to raising the number of assets among youth.

While the Waterbury PPB will conduct programs to assist all community partners in building assets for youth, January is dedicated to helping the area youth serving community-based and school-based programs representatives to evaluate the level of assets each organization is delivering. At its January 10, 2008 meeting, the PPB will offer a Technical Assistance Session designed to assist those who provide programs and activities for young people to examine their existing programs relative to the Assets, and to find ways to increase the number of assets intentionally delivered through such programs. Armed with key information about the process

of identifying and evaluating assets in programs, staff from member youth serving organizations will leave prepared to "Build More Assets." The PPB will announce the availability of similar Technical Assistance Sessions in the coming weeks and months.

The PPB meets every second Thursday of the month, at 9:30 AM, at Family Services of Greater Waterbury, 34 Murray Street, Waterbury, CT. New members are always welcome! For more information about the PPB or Developmental Assets, contact Louise Allen Brown at lbrown@waterbury.k12.ct.us or Amanda Hunyadi at 203-573-0264, ahunyadi@waterburyyouthservices.org.

Article By Louise Allen Brown, Chairperson, Waterbury Prevention Policy Board